

Santa Clara County, CA use of Montgomery APC's Latina Health Promoter Curriculum

One of the biggest challenges in communicating public health emergency preparedness is reaching communities of color who do not readily trust information produced by Government. In the Latino community, trusted sources include family, neighbors, friends, healthcare providers, Latino celebrities, community leaders--and promotoras. Promotoras, or lay outreach workers, are trained community members to whom residents frequently turn for information.

In Santa Clara County, California, promotoras are “regular working moms who are important people in their communities,” according to Marta Lugo, MPH, public communication officer for the Santa Clara County Health Department (SCCHD). Lugo successfully used promotoras to educate the historically underserved Latino community about public health emergency preparedness planning.

In late spring of 2010, the health department contracted with two community organizations to implement a grassroots outreach utilizing promotoras to provide H1N1 information in the Spanish speaking community and to encourage vaccination. The two organizations, Vision y Compromiso and St. Louise Regional Hospital Department of Community Health, were so successful that the county health department decided to expand the program to include all hazard public health emergency preparedness planning.

Lugo and two other Spanish-speaking staff members trained the promotoras in emergency preparedness using a curriculum developed by the Montgomery County Maryland APC, called *Emergency Preparedness in the Latino Community: Training Manual for Promoters*. “We downloaded the curriculum directly from the Montgomery County website (www.montgomerycountymd.gov.apc), said Lugo. “We added some additional information on other types of natural disasters (the might happen in California) and more explanation about our own local role during an emergency.”

“The promotoras were all very engaged and asked a lot of questions throughout the training and had their own ideas and suggestions for tailoring the information to share with their communities,” Lugo said.

The success of the training became clear once the promotoras began to implement the campaign in the community. They implemented a grassroots campaign including small group presentations in private homes, churches, and community centers, as well as outreach at local markets and businesses located in the targeted neighborhoods. The goal was to educate targeted communities on the different types of public health emergencies and to assist families in putting together their family emergency and neighborhood preparedness plans.

During the 3-month campaign, promotoras conducted more than 75 presentations, held more than 30 community events, and conducted more than ten health fairs reaching more than 16,000 people with information on emergency preparedness. More than 7,000 people filled out emergency ID cards. Another 300 community members participated in plays about emergency

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preparedness, and the staff were interviewed on two Spanish language radio and television programs.

In 13 communities, 13 Neighborhood Emergency Meeting Points were identified and 48 neighborhood groups were formed with each group receiving an emergency kit. When asked if they were interested in enrolling in the County's Alert SCC, a reverse 911 emergency alert notification system, approximately 75 percent of the participants indicated they were.

The enthusiasm from the participants was captured in their comments:

“The guide to develop a family plan helped me a lot to organize my family, I did not know how to get started.”

“Thank you for providing this information in Spanish. I have seen the ads but I didn’t understand the meaning.”

Promotoras reported that parents had heard about emergency preparedness from their children but have not received the same education. And many people expressed that they would continue to pass the information to others.

Lugo presented the results of the campaign at the American Public Health Association’s 2011 annual meeting in Washington, DC, where she noted that “The promotora model increases family and community emergency planning by establishing a direct and trusted link into the community you are trying reach and enhancing the health department’s credibility and trust with the community.” Lugo says promotoras could be used before and during an emergency event by acting as a liaison between the health department and residents to help foster deeper community relationships and trust before an emergency actually strikes.

This successful outreach effort was made so much easier because of the APC training tool. “The curriculum happened to fit perfectly,” Lugo said. “It saved a lot of time; I didn’t have to reinvent the wheel.”